

INQUIRY INTO 2022 REVIEW OF THE WORKERS COMPENSATION SCHEME

Organisation: Australian Association of Social Workers

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Submission to the 2022 Review of the Workers Compensation scheme

Standing Committee on Law and
Justice

JULY 2022



AASW

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Australian Association
of Social Workers

About the Australian Association of Social Workers

The Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW) is the national professional body representing more than 16,000 social workers throughout Australia. The AASW works to promote the profession of social work including setting the benchmark for professional education and practice in social work, while also advocating on matters of human rights to advance social justice.

Acknowledgements

This submission has been developed in consultation with our members in New South Wales (NSW) who are service providers under State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA).

For further information or questions relating to this submission, please contact:

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The AASW welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the 2022 Review of the Workers Compensation scheme. Considering the surge in needs for mental health support, Accredited Mental Health Social Workers (AMHSWs) who are delivering services under the scheme have seen increasing demands for counselling services. However, the maximum fee for AMHSWs to provide services under the scheme has neither been benchmarked against other worker compensation schemes across Australia nor other federal schemes. This has led to a barrier for those requiring mental health services being able to access services. In addition, the coordination of services under the scheme is fragmented so that the complex needs of claimants are often not adequately addressed.

Therefore, the AASW recommends that:

- **the maximum fee for AMHSWs under the Scheme be reviewed and increased in alignment with AASW Service Recommended Fee.**
- **new case management service items be added for social workers to coordinate the care of a person**

The maximum fee for AMHSWs under the Scheme

Only AMHSWs are eligible to provide counselling services under State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA). Comparing the maximum payment for AMHSWs with other comparable schemes, the AASW is concerned that this can act as a barrier for AMHSWs to provide services under the scheme amid increasing numbers of psychological claims (see Table 1).

Table 1: Fee schedules for AMHSWs across Federal and state schemes

Schemes	Service item	Set fee (per hour)
SIRA NSW ¹	Initial consultation and treatment – Social Workers	\$167.6
	Subsequent consultation and treatment – Social Workers	\$158.8
WorkCover Queensland	Adjustment Counselling – Initial Consultation	\$208
	Adjustment Counselling – Subsequent Consultation	\$208
Return to Work South Australia	Return to work assessment	\$197.5
WorkSafe Victoria	Initial Consultation - AMHSWs	\$178.1
	Subsequent Consultation - AMHSWs	\$159.5
NDIS ²	Assessment Recommendation Therapy or Training	\$193.99 (Metropolitan NSW)
	Supports – Social Worker	\$271.59 (Remote NSW)
		\$290.99 (very remote NSW)

With the amount of payment lower than other mainstream schemes, some of our members have already capped the number of people they see or choose not to apply to become a provider

¹ State Insurance Regulatory Authority 2022, *Psychology and Counselling Fees and Practice Requirements*, https://www.sira.nsw.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/1037163/Psychology-and-Counselling-fees-and-practice-requirements-1-January-2022.pdf, accessed 7 July 2022

² National Disability Insurance Agency 2022, *NDIS Pricing Arrangements and Price Limits*, <https://www.ndis.gov.au/providers/pricing-arrangements>, accessed 7 July 2022.

under SIRA. The AASW is concerned that this has created a barrier for people with a work-related injury, in particular those who live in regional and remote areas, to access timely and geographically convenient services. In order to address this issue of access, we refer the Committee to AASW Service Recommended Fee in which an hour of casework/individual therapeutic work should be priced at **AUD\$240**.³

The AASW recommends that the maximum fee for AMHSWs under the Scheme be reviewed and increased in alignment with AASW Service Recommended Fee.

New Case Management items under the Schemes

Currently, the provision of case management services under Worker Compensation and Motor Accident Schemes is fragmented. While insurers manage claims, there is not a single designated cohort of service providers under the scheme who manage a person's care plan and assist them in identifying and accessing the kind of services that best suits their needs. As such, the responsibility to undertake such case management role has been left to General Practitioners or insurers who are often not professionally trained to provide these services.

AMHSWs are best placed to provide case management services for people with complex needs. Social work has an extensive history in case management and care coordination. The social work profession and the practice of case management developed concurrently, with hospital social workers being among the first professional case managers in Australia.⁴ Social work case management is 'a method of providing services whereby a professional social worker collaboratively assesses the needs of the client and the client's family, when appropriate, and arranges, coordinates, monitors, evaluates, and advocates for a package of multiple services to meet the specific client's complex needs.'⁵ We refer the Committee to the AASW's [scope of practice documents on case management and care coordination](#), which details the range of services social workers can provide. This case management model is not only supported by an implementation analysis in the UK⁶, but it is also recognised by Transport Accident Commission in Victoria, where separate case management service fee schedules have already been established.⁷

The AASW recommends new case management service items be added for social workers to coordinate the care of a person.

³ Australian Association of Social Workers, Schedule of Recommended Fee for Accredited Social Workers in Private Practice, <https://www.aasw.asn.au/document/item/8385>, accessed 7 July 2022

⁴ National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2009). Social Work & Care Coordination, NASW Press, Washington DC

⁵ Society for Social Work Leadership in Health. (2015). Social Work Best Practice Healthcare Case Management Standards, SSW LHC, PA

⁶ Hudon, C., Chouinard, M. C., Bisson, M., Brousselle, A., Lambert, M., Danish, A., ... & Sabourin, V. (2022). Case Management Programs for Improving Integrated Care for Frequent Users of Healthcare Services: An Implementation Analysis. *International Journal of Integrated Care*, 22(1).

⁷ Transport Accident Commission Victoria. (2022). *Case management fees*. Accessed 18th July 2022. <https://www.tac.vic.gov.au/providers/invoicing-and-fees/fee-schedule/case-management>

Conclusion

The AASW welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the 2022 Review of the Workers Compensation scheme. While we welcome the inclusion of AMHSW in the provision of counselling services under the scheme, the scheme requires further adjustments to incentivise more counselling providers to join the scheme and to provide whole-of-person-care for people with complex psychological needs. The AASW welcomes further opportunity to work with NSW Government to progress these changes.



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